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TAGS: NATO PREL MARR IN

SUBJECT: NATO-INDIA TO ESTABLISH DEPUTY-LEVEL POINTS OF CONTACT

REF: A. NATO 0062

1B. NEW DELHI 567

Classified By: DCM Richard G. Olson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In the latest development of NATO's Global Partnerships initiative, NATO and India have agreed to establish points of contact at the level of Deputy Foreign Minister and Deputy Secretary General. NATO D/SYG Rizzo will likely visit New Delhi for consultations. End Summary.

12. (C) NATO SYG de Hoop Scheffer told PermReps February 7 that the Indian Embassy had advised him that a Deputy Foreign Minister in New Delhi has been appointed as its point of contact for NATO. In response, the SYG said that he has asked Deputy SYG Minuto Rizzo to travel to New Delhi. The Indian Embassy in Brussels has been unable to identify for us the D/FM who will serve as point of contact in New Delhi.

13. (C) The reported decision to establish a POC follows Pakistani PM Aziz's January 31 invitation to the SYG to visit Islamabad (REFTEL A). The SYG has accepted, but no date has been set for the visit. D/SYG Rizzo recently visited Islamabad.

14. (C) COMMENT: India's increasing contributions to Afghanistan (REFTEL B) may be the driving force behind its unprecedented outreach to NATO. The January 31 visit of Pakistani PM Aziz with the NAC could be another motivation. India has long been among NATO's "contact countries" -- the loosest category of partners -- but these contacts have been limited by India's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement. Nevertheless, its extensive experience with multi-national military operations in UN peacekeeping forces could provide broad potential for cooperation. At its November 2006 Riga Summit, NATO agreed to develop global partnerships -- offering enhanced tools for consulting and operating with capable, like-minded democracies worldwide. From the U.S. perspective, the NATO-India relationship is a natural fit, although some Allies have reservations. The challenge for NATO will be to balance its relationships in South Asia. End Comment.

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